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Alcuin Club Tracts.

II.

CONSOLIDATION

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH UNION ON JUNE 1st, 1897.

BY THE

REV. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A.

CANON RESIDENTIARY AND CHANCELLOR OF ST. PAUL'S.

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sibi rectum videbatur hoc faciebat.*

(Lib. Iudicum xvii. 6.)

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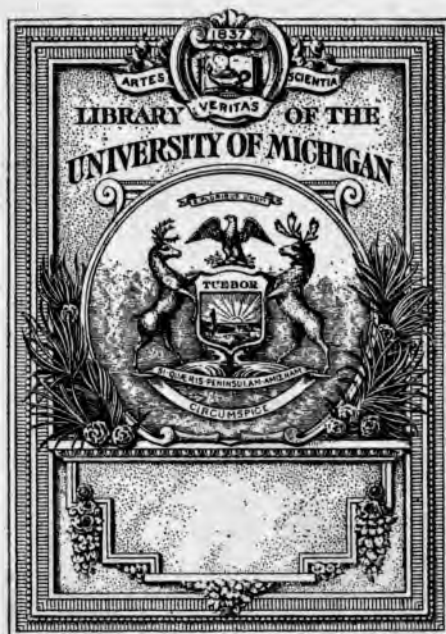
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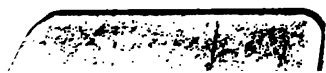
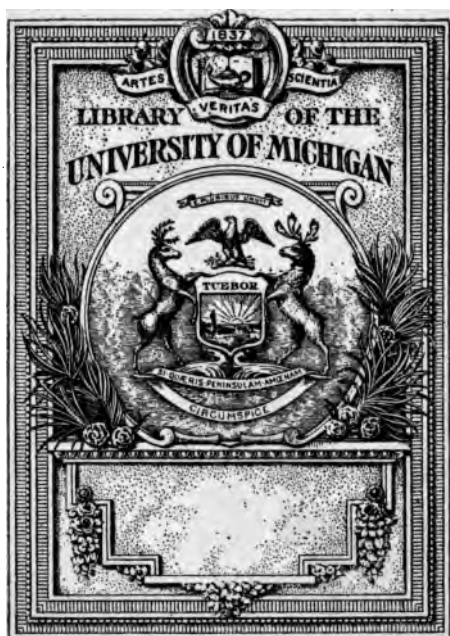
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CONSOLIDATION.

It was a saying of the well-known Vicar of Wantage, the late Dean Butler, when he was entering in his parochial log-book any record of a festival service or special function: "Write down the mistakes which were made that we may know what wants looking to next time." It seems to me that in the joy and almost exultation in which we look back to-day over the marvellous development of the English Church during the sixty years' reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, we need a *vates sacer*, who will faithfully record the mistakes which we have made and the wrong turns we have taken, for future use in the glorious prospect which God is now opening up before the great Anglican Communion. It is idle to deny that there are two aspects of the situation to-day; the one triumphant, and the other anxious. It is one thing to drive back hosts of invaders, and win post after post which had been held in the interests of indolence and half-belief; it is another thing to organise that resistance on a secure basis for the future, and to settle on permanent conditions the results won at the point of the sword. We all know the misleading phrase, which wins its way because it has contrived to masquerade as an authoritative truth: "The Reformation Settlement." The English Church since the Reformation has never had a chance to settle, except in days when she looked perilously near that settlement which is called sinking. Is she any nearer to a right settlement now? Do her evident vitality, her great popularity, the unmistakeable signs of power which she has put forth, the victories won, the disasters averted, the mistakes surmounted, in one word, the great awakening as to her true position which we see on all sides, do they open up any hope of consolidation, any policy of rearrangement or readjustment to altering conditions? At last, has the time come, is a Victorian Settlement possible or desirable? If we are faithful to our policy of writing

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down mistakes, I think we cannot deny, as we cast our eyes over the battlefields of the last sixty years, that our victories have been won in the most unscientific way. It has been Inkerman over again. A dense fog of prejudice, misunderstanding, distrust, timidity, has enveloped the combatants. At times we hardly knew friend from foe. We fired off into the gloom, and we found that we were after all defending the very key of the position. But we could not see our officers. Oftentimes they were lost in the fog, oftentimes they would call us back; and we had to fight as best we could. It has been largely a soldier's battle. I do not say this to blame our leaders, they had a very difficult task, but I fear it cannot be denied that the Bishops let the control of the movement slip out of their hands. Dr. Newman ought never to have left us; Mr. Mackonochie ought never to have been forced into the attitude which he was obliged to assume.

The older among us can remember the traditional watchword of the Tractarians and earlier Ritualists; it was a simple, almost slavish, obedience to the Prayer Book in every detail. It would be impossible to find a party of men who more honoured, almost idolised, the letter of Church law. It is idle to deny that that aspect of things is now completely changed. The High Church party (if I may keep the old term, however hateful it may be) are now conspicuous among those who chafe under the narrow restrictions of what they regard as obsolete rubrics, and largely practise the modern doctrine, that the best way to get a bad law mended is to break it. How has this change of front come about, within the memory of many of us? I think it is perfectly easy to give the answer. The ritual and doctrinal prosecutions, so unwisely pushed, and so unfortunately allowed to proceed, with the Erastian flavour of Privy Council law most obnoxiously prevalent, produced a widespread feeling of irritation, which the reckless passing of that most unfortunate measure, the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874 (whose body has been so completely buried that we have almost forgotten that it once lived) aggravated to an extent which assumed at one time threatening proportions. But the climax was reached, when the opening rubric of the Prayer Book was eviscerated, and we were

told on the highest authority in 1877 that the rubric, which we had hitherto read as follows: "And here is to be noted that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof shall be retained and be in use as were in this Church of England, by the authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI." was to be henceforth read "shall *not* be retained and shall *not* be in use, by order of the Privy Council." I have no doubt whatever in my own mind that that decision gave the *coup de grace* to the wavering allegiance of the party of order to the law of the Prayer Book, which turned out to be a nose of wax in the hands of the Privy Council, swayed by the violent counsels of an Association of whom the kindest thing is to say nothing. It was then felt, if this be the law, then the law means anything. We must find out the law for ourselves.

In the meantime, in 1872, as it was felt that the Church of England was out-growing in many ways her sixteenth-century clothes, an Act, well meant, but attended with most unfortunate results, was allowed to pass through Parliament, known as the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act. Of this it is not too much to say that it has set almost every priest in the land, be he liturgiologist, theologian, scholar, or not, tinkering our unfortunate Prayer Book services until we feel that the witness is true which says, "The Prayer Book conception of the Divine Service was destroyed in 1872"¹ by that which the late Archbishop called an "unfortunate and much perverted Act."² A priest now will arrange for you a shortened service, with or without reference to the provisions of the Act, in as short a time as he would write a note. Services without head or tail, Mattins with no *Venite*, Evensong with no *Magnificat*, no sequence of Psalms, no continuity of lessons, are foisted upon us. The very Eucharist is mutilated, and the groaning laity are "at the mercy of the officiating minister." No wonder that the traditional party of order finds itself somewhat in confusion, if when turning from the cold embrace of the Privy Council, who governed rubrics by a "Not," or used them as fly-traps to catch unwary

¹ See the *Church Quarterly Review* for April, 1896. vol. xlii. p. 71.

² Edward White Benson, *Fishers of Men*, London, 1893. p. 97.

Ritualists, they took refuge in the freedom of the Shortened Services Act, where at least there was relief from prosecution, because there was nothing which continued in one stay long enough to be prosecuted.

All this soldiers' battle may have been magnificent, but it was not really war. It is impossible to go on like this. And yet we do feel that the whole tendency of things is setting largely towards expansion and freedom, and against cramping rubrics; and, if we are not careful, the strong river of the Church of England's liturgiology may be drained away, like that river of which Alexander broke the strength, into innumerable streams of shortened services, popular "devotions," and modern adaptations, introduced without authority, and drafted without judgement.

It is impossible, in this connexion, to view without apprehension the kindly, well-meant scheme of the Bishop of Winchester, appealing as it does to many of us, in what seems a practicable line of Church Reform: that Convocation should have power to alter the rubrics of the Prayer Book from time to time, subject to the veto of Parliament, after receiving letters of business *ad hoc*; but coupled with this ominous note: "It is not, to my mind," says the Bishop, "quite satisfactory that when we want to know about some rule which is to be, or ought to be, enjoined, it should be to archæologists rather than to theologians that we are bound to go."¹ Surely the history of the reign we are now commemorating will tell us sufficiently the extreme danger of a theological, as distinguished from a liturgical, revision of the rubrics. Should we not have been compromised again and again, if Convocation had enjoyed this power during the last thirty years? "Rubrics," it has been said, "seem to be devised as a carefully arranged barrier against ignorance and lawlessness." We all know what we have lost in the well-meant but ignorant restoration of our parish churches in many cases. Everything that was not Gothic, or supposed Gothic, or carpenters' Gothic, was harried out of our churches. Jacobean stall work and screen-work, of immense value, were destroyed, and classical churches were deprived of their natural beauty in order to give

¹ *Guardian*, 1896. February, p. 291. col. iii.

them a Gothic flavour, of which they were incapable. So there would be no security that, under the impulse of a wave of fashion, or of an arbitrarily selected canon of Catholicity, we should not be deprived by theologians who were not antiquaries of interesting national customs and traditional uses, and be reduced to as meaningless a uniformity as a national rite over which Ultramontaniam has drawn its levelling plane of exact uniformity.

There have been in the last few recent years opportunities which seemed to give promise of better things in the way of settlement. There was, first of all, the courageous, and at the time much misunderstood, action of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, which resulted in the admirable judgement delivered by him in the notorious case of *Read v. the Bishop of Lincoln* in 1890, ending in the retreat of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1892 from the untenable position which had so long been provocative of an utter defiance to judgements based avowedly on policy and not on law. One cannot be too grateful to the Archbishop that he had courage in the best way he could to pick his way amidst the *débris* of reverence for law and authority which the long series of misguided judgements had produced, and so give the leaders of the Catholic movement a chance of recovering their original, their normal position as the upholders of the policy of law and order. But this opportunity was not largely utilized. It is easy enough to pull down authority and discredit it; it is not so easy to restore it once more to its honoured throne. Another opportunity was given on a much smaller scale and in much less grave matters, in the final charge to his clergy delivered by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple, in 1895, before he vacated the see of London. Here was a Bishop who commanded universal respect, and who was well known for his absolute justice, and his devotion to the best interests of his clergy; one, pre-eminently whom those from whom he most seemed to differ yet felt they could trust. And he made a strong, a stern appeal against unauthorized "devotions," emphasizing strongly the promises made by every incumbent and licensed curate before permission is given to officiate; and taking on himself as Bishop armed with all the power which the

veto against troublesome prosecution gives him (a right which, be it remembered, the Bishop of London secured by his courageous action in the St. Paul's reredos case) all the responsibility of any departure from accustomed forms, and charging his clergy to do nothing in this respect without his sanction. It was felt by many, we know, that a vigorous voice had spoken, and that here, if nothing more, was a clear note of recall to remind us that when positions had been won in defiance of the usual system of tactics, the first duty which wisdom and statesmanship suggest is some sort of reorganization, and a recall to first principles. This opportunity was, again, not largely followed up. But it met with a response which marked a distinct advance; there was a definite indication that men were prepared to listen; and that freedom and consideration had done what coercion will always fail to do. It had prepared the way for a reasonable settlement whenever there was an unreasonable departure from principle.

And now we have a third opportunity, in one sense the greatest of all. The late Archbishop's judgement restored to the Catholic leaders their traditional policy, and put them on the side of law and order, from which they had been most cruelly and unwisely driven. The charge of Dr. Temple showed that the old distrust of episcopal interference might be laid aside, that sympathy and justice were to be looked for, and that there was every desire to understand those with whom the Bishops might be supposed least to sympathise, while at the same time it was made clear that the place of the Bishops was at the head to lead and control, not at the rear, dragged along (if I may borrow an expressive phrase) by the hair of their mind, by movements which had passed out of their control. The very strength of the administration of the late Bishop of London, Dr. Temple, combined with his great tolerance wherever he saw real work, has been in itself a stage in the process of recall and consolidation which I am advocating. And now we have, perhaps, the greatest opportunity of all. It is not too much to say that the Letter of the two Archbishops addressed to the whole body of Bishops in the Catholic Church, which has come to cheer us this year, is a distinct and most marked

step in advance in the constructive policy of the English Church. It has moved us out of that timid Protestantism, whose motto is, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." And it has announced with positive conviction what the Church of England really is, what she believes and what she teaches, not only in what it says, but in the public opinion behind it, which enabled it to be said. In the spirit which it breathes, and the power which it displays, *Saepius Officio* must move us to profound feelings of thankfulness, and may well indicate a definite stage in that affirmative, constructive policy which, thank God, the Church of England has at last been able to adopt, in the face of the pitiless storm of misrepresentation and attack, which she is now strong enough to resist.

What, then, do we want? It seems to me that, beyond all things, at the present day we want an objective. 'In the old days, as we have seen, there was the Prayer Book; all we had to do was to unstop the wells which the Philistines had stopped up, and call them after the names by which our fathers had called them. Here was something safe, something which a long and eventful history had consecrated, which was dug deep in Catholic tradition, and which the more we emphasized it the more it showed its beauty. And whatever happens, one still may be permitted to hope that there may be no material, I would fain say *no*, alteration of the Prayer Book. But, at the same time, the spirit of change is in the air, change will come, has come, and we must settle now what is to be our objective. Of course, it is easy enough to say "Catholic tradition," but Catholic tradition is not to be learned by a circular tour on the Continent armed with a Cook's ticket; nor is it to be picked up in the columns of religious journalism, nor, indeed, to be gained by the exclusive study of one age, or one portion, of the great Catholic Church. Neither does it confer an unlimited right to say "Let us pray" at all points where the Prayer Book is thought to be ignorantly deficient. We want to get rid of the ecclesiastical jackdaw, who gets scraps here, and bright patches there, and silver spoons from another place, to the great scandal of the legitimate occupants of the farmyard, who prefer something useful, or at least

something which is in harmony with their own nature. And therefore it is of the very last importance that we should set up authority of some kind. If we have authority, we may safely expand; if we expand without authority, unless the history of religious failures has been written in vain, we shall topple over in this way or in that, or at least produce a reaction in which all the hard-won victories will be lost to us.

In view, then, of the expansion of ceremonial, of services, of functions of all sorts, in view of the growing, pushing life in which the vigorous Church of England is putting forth her Catholic strength, can anything be done to give us a well measured and deliberate proportionate expansion, or are we to be left to go on, on the principles of individual Reformation, with *ex post facto* benediction, if it succeeds, or a terrible banning if it fails, with public opinion as the final court of appeal? It seems to me that what we want, if the expansion is to go on and succeed, is something analogous to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which was founded, as we know, in the end of the sixteenth century in order that in all the Churches of Rome and the world, in Masses, Divine Service, and everything else as regards Divine worship, the ancient ceremonies might be rigorously followed; that if any primitive rite had fallen into disuse it might be restored to its ancient splendour or reformed; all books, as pontificals, rituals, ceremonials, might be amended and reformed, and controversy on these matters be determined.¹ Its object was to promote uniformity, which should at the same time be consistent with permission of considerable differences of detail, according to the customs and traditions of different nations in the externals of Divine worship. What we have felt all along is this, and it may be said without any sort of disparagement of our noble bench of Bishops; indeed, they would say it themselves, that there is no security that a Bishop *qua* Bishop shall be able to decide knotty points of liturgical and some-

¹ See the bull *Immensa*, published by Sixtus V. in 1588. The part specially relating to the establishment of the congregation of rites has been printed by Dom Prosper Guéranger in the appendix to the first volume of his

Institutions liturgiques, Note G. in the edition of 1840. However good the intention may have been, some excellent ritualists are far from being convinced of the help which the foundation of the S.C.R. has been to liturgical studies.

times antiquarian learning. Some have said that a service, or a piece of ceremonial, sanctioned by one Bishop might be denied by his successors. Most emphatically we do not want Bishops to break ecclesiastical law, and we do not want Bishops to sanction the breaking by others of ecclesiastical law. We complained once of their coldness and distrust; now we complain of their kindness. In matters of this kind the personal element should as far as possible be kept out. Why should it not be possible for a body of experts to sit permanently at Lambeth, consisting of liturgiologists, ritualists, and theologians, simply chosen as the men who know most about these things? On no account on a system of checkmate, one High, and one Low, and one Broad, resulting of course in a dead-lock; but chosen as the men who, whatever they might be, within of course the definite limits of the Church, know most about the matter. And let these act as a consultative body, for the Bishops of the Anglican Communion; before whom should come, first of all, that very large mass of addition and diminution for which the Act of 1872 is responsible, the general eclecticism for which our modern travel is responsible, and the definite and serious additions or alterations which may be thought desirable by the Church in her corporate capacity, expressed in Convocation or elsewhere, not by the individual priest or layman, with his Catholic tradition behind him, from whom there is no appeal, because no one can find out what it means. It is, I suppose, a fact that our Archbishops, in the letter to which I have already referred, have consulted theologians; and, if so, it is an immense gain that Bishops, however learned, should have made it clear that the episcopate, like any other governing body, does need, and may most usefully consult, its experts. We need not think that we have fallen short of our neighbours if we refuse to add to the personal infallibility of one Bishop the personal omniscience of all. They have shown us that we can trust them as a body; they no longer look coldly on us; the Catholic movement has their general sanction and help. We now want them to show us not only that we may trust their judgement, but that we must respect the unanswerable power with which they will be able to restrain and guide the growing, pushing vigour

of the Church, clothing herself with fresh beauty, and developing new possibilities in her services and ritual expression.

It is possible that we may feel our way to a National Ceremonial; we are old enough to have clothes of our own, not the cast-off garments of an elder sister, which do not always fit. But we feel that any scheme which is to have an element of permanence in it must be true to that Catholic tradition which the Prayer Book has so manfully maintained. The second year of King Edward VI. is not a date for lawyers to wrangle over, but represents a time, a fixed date, in our history from which we look back at all the Catholicity which is streaming in from behind, and forward at all the vigorous national growth which is reaching out in all directions in front. While we thank God for the marvellous Church progress of this reign, let us consolidate by definite means what we have secured. And the first step is to set up authority, to help our Bishops back to their lawful thrones, and to help them to rule constitutionally, with the voice and the support of the Living Church at their back.

